

## Sūrah Dukhān

### Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* is the same as that of the previous one, and its introductory passage is also the same viz a viz the implied meaning as that of the introductory passage of the previous *sūrah*. However, the difference between the two *sūrahs* is that in the previous one arguments in favour of monotheism are prominent, while in this one, instead of monotheism the element of warning is prominent. If the whole *sūrah* is reflected upon, it will become evident that in it the Qur'ān and the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) are validated through the premise that the fate which the Qur'ān is informing its rejecters is something which is certain to take place both in this world and the Hereafter. History bears witness to it and it also the requisite of sense and human nature. In other words, it can also be stated that the warning sounded in the last verse of the previous *sūrah*: (۸۹:۴۳) فَاصْفَحْ عَنْهُمْ وَقُلْ سَلَامٌ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (ignore them and say: “peace be to you”; so soon they shall come to know, (43:89)) is substantiated and corroborated in this *sūrah*. In the subsequent *sūrahs* of the group, this subject will become even more prominent. So much so, the Madīnan *sūrahs* at the end of the group declare that the Quraysh will be stripped of their position and the believers will be divinely helped and will reign supreme in the land.

### Analysis of the Discourse

**Verses (1-16):** A reference to the exalted and majestic nature of the Qur'ān: it was revealed in the blessed Night of Destiny (ليلة القدر) in which affairs are decided at the behest of God. The Qur'ān has been revealed as a requisite of mercy and providence of the God Who hears and knows all, and except Whom there is no god. The purpose of its revelation is to warn people who are leading their lives in indifference and apathy; they should wake up from their slumber and prepare for the day which is to come. There were people in those times who would say that they would only regard Muḥammad (sws) to be a true prophet if they were shown the promised punishment. Such people are warned that the faith which is professed after observing this punishment is of no benefit. If this punishment is being deferred, it does not mean that its promise is

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merely a threat. Even if God grants respite to people in this world, it does not mean that they will be saved from His torment. They shall necessarily be punished in the Hereafter and a grave punishment it shall be.

**Verses (17-33):** The example of the Pharaoh and his people is cited before the Quraysh so that they can learn a lesson. Moses (sws) warned them of the Hereafter but they remained afflicted with the arrogance produced in them by their wealth and status. Once the truth had been conclusively conveyed to them, the Almighty destroyed them. Their country as well as their wealth and assets were occupied by others and the Israelites who were suffering in their yolk of slavery were emancipated and became a great nation of the world.

**Verses (34-67):** The real reason behind the arrogance and haughtiness of the Quraysh is alluded to: they do not believe in any concept of afterlife. For this reason, its warnings seem a piece of jest to them. In order to admonish them, logical as well as historical arguments in favour of reward and punishment are briefly referred to. It is mentioned in detail that God will not deal equally between those who spent their lives in indifference to the Hereafter and those who did so while having full faith in it. The Almighty will deal with them differently, and this dealing will be totally based on justice. The disbelievers will suffer the punishment of their ingratitude, and the believers will be duly rewarded for their virtues – and this is real success and not the one which these naïve people are lured away with.

**Verses (58-59):** This is the closing section of the *sūrah*. A reference is made to the great favour done by the Almighty to the Quraysh by revealing the Qur’ān to them in lucid Arabic. It may be noted that the *sūrah* began with a note on the exaltedness of the Qur’ān and it ends on the same note. In it, the Quraysh are warned that the Almighty has equipped the Qur’ān with all essential requisites which are needed to conclusively convey the truth. If they do not duly honour it, they should get ready to face the consequences that are destined for those who reject the messengers of God. In the last verse, the Prophet (sws) is also assured that if instead of benefiting from this favour, these people want to wait for the punishment, then he too should wait for the advent of this evil day for them.

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## Section I: Verses (1-16)

## Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١) وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢) إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ (٣) فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ (٤) أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (٥) رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦) رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ (٧) لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨) بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ يَلْعَبُونَ (٩) فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٠) يَغْشى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١) رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢) أَتَى لَهُمُ الدَّكْرَى وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٣) ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُونٌ (١٤) إِنَّا كَاشِفُو الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَائِدُونَ (١٥) يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرَى إِنَّا مُنتَقِمُونَ (١٦)

This is Hamim. By the lucid Book! Indeed, We revealed it in a blessed night. Indeed, We were to inform people. On this night, all wise matters are distributed as a special directive from Ourselves. Indeed, We were to send a Messenger as a special blessing from your Lord. Indeed, He it is Who sees and hears. With His mercy Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you show conviction. There is no god but Him. He gives life and death. He is your Lord and also the Lord of your forefathers. (1-8)

Yet they are in doubt, playing about. So wait for the day when the sky will appear with a palpable smoke. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment. Lord! Distance this torment from us; we are now believers. But what opportunity remains for them now to pay heed! An enlightening Messenger had come to them. So they turned away from him and said: "A madman, taught by others!" If We for some time open the torment, you will do what you had been doing. Remember the day when We will grasp intensely; on that day, We will take full revenge. (9-16)

**Explanation**

حم (١)<sup>1</sup>

This is the Qur'ānic name of the *sūrah*. The previous *sūrah* also has the same name. The commonality in name bears evidence to commonality in topic. Thus, a little deliberation shows that this *sūrah* explains in detail the threat sounded to the Quraysh in the last verse of the previous *sūrah* viz a viz the fate the Quraysh would meet as a result of denying the Messenger of God.

The succeeding verses will elucidate this.

وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)<sup>2</sup>

The particle *وَ* signifies an oath and it has been explained in the course of this *tafsīr* that in Arabic, oaths are meant to substantiate a claim. For this reason, the question arises about the claim that is meant to be substantiated here. In general, our exegetes have regarded the very next verse to be the statement of this claim. Though there is nothing wrong in this view as far as linguistic principles are concerned; however, I am not fully convinced on this view. An oath and its complement (the statement which substantiates the claim) are related to one another the way a premise and corroborating evidence are. Here, I am unable to understand how the Qur'ān being a lucid Book bears evidence to the fact that God revealed it in a blessed night. In my opinion, the complement of oath is suppressed here. Contextual evidence and occasion of the discourse point to this suppression. There are several examples in the Qur'ān where a complement of oath is not mentioned because of concomitant factors. A clear example of this exists in Sūrah Qāf: ق وَالْقُرْآنَ الْمَجِيدَ بَلْ عَجَبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ ق وَالْقُرْآنَ الْمَجِيدَ بَلْ عَجَبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ (٥٠: ١-٢) (This is Sūrah Qāf. By the glorious Qur'ān! In fact, they were confounded by the fact that a warner from amongst themselves had come to them. (50:1-2)). Obviously, the complement of oath is suppressed here. In a similar manner, it is also suppressed in the verse under discussion. The benefit of this suppression is that whatever is implied can be supposed to be understood as per the contextual indications. If this suppression is revealed, the overall discourse would be something to the effect: It is a lucid Book which in itself is a conclusive proof on its claim; it bears evidence to the fact that the fate with which it is threatening its rejecters is certain to come; the person

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1. This is Hamim.

2. By the lucid Book!

who is presenting this Book should not be regarded by them to be a lunatic or a madman; he is an indisputable Messenger of God; all his preaching is based on wisdom; those who accept it will earn the mercy of God and those who reject it will earn his wrath; people do not need to look beyond the Qur'ān to find arguments in support of all these premises; the Qur'ān alone is sufficient to highlight each of them; those who are denying it are calling for their own doom.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ (٣)

This is a mention of the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty to reveal this Book. The purpose is to make evident upon the addressees that this Book is not a matter of jest nor is it the pretentious product of a lunatic; on the contrary, it is a grand part of a great scheme of God and to reveal it the Almighty chose that blessed night in which all affairs of wisdom are specially entrusted by Him. The purpose of revealing it is to warn people whose forefathers had not been warned so that the truth is conclusively revealed to them from God and they are not able to present any excuse on the Day of Judgement that they had been seized without any warning. There are certain other aspects also which relate to this elaborate arrangement undertaken by the Almighty while revealing the Qur'ān. I will allude to them in the *tafsīrs* of the Sūrah Jinn and Sūrah Qadr respectively.

The words لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ obviously allude to لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (the Night of Destiny). Thus it is specified in Sūrah Qadr that it was in this night that the Qur'ān was revealed:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (١) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (٢) لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (٣) تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (٤) سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ (٥)

Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny. And what do you imagine what the Night of Destiny is? Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein [with decrees] about all matters, by the permission of their Lord. The night is peace in its entirety. It remains until the rise of dawn. (97:1-5)

The لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ (the Night of Destiny) has to be some night of the month of

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3. Indeed, We revealed it in a blessed night. Indeed, We were to inform people.

Ramaḍān because the Qur'ān has specified that it was in this very month in which the Qur'ān was revealed: (شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ (٢: ١٨٥) (it is the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur'ān was revealed, (2:185)).

As far as the question of the exact day is concerned, it is difficult to answer it. What can at best be said about it in the light of various narratives is that it is of the last ten nights of Ramaḍān. Apparently the divine wisdom behind not specifying it is that people should continue to seek it, and in this manner their fondness and desire to find it is tested. It is in this fondness and desire on the part of the people that all the blessings of this night are concealed.

It is evident from all these details that there is no room for the view that this night refers to a night of the month of Sha'bān or of any other month.

The statement that the Qur'ān was revealed in this night does not necessitate that the whole Qur'ān was revealed in it; it refers to the fact that its revelation began in it. When a task was initiated in a blessed period of time and the decision for its complete revelation was also taken it is as if the task was accomplished in that blessed period of time. This is because no one can change the decisions of God. There are examples found in the Qur'ān in which the Almighty has stated in the past tense a promise which is to be fulfilled in the future.

The undefined form of the expression لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ is meant to express grandeur and majesty. The fact that specific days, months and periods of time are regarded as blessed because of the gain and benefit they afford. Just as in our material world there exist various seasons suitable for certain crops and not every season is suitable for every crop, in a similar manner, the spiritual realm also contains times, months and years which have specific characteristics. The worship ritual which the Almighty has prescribed for a particular day and month will afford the desired blessings only when it is vigilantly undertaken at that particular time or day or month; otherwise, just as wheat sown in unfavourable seasons will not bear results, similarly the prayer said at the wrong time, the fast kept at the wrong time and the *hajj* offered at the wrong time will not bear any result, and if they do and it would be very marginal. In the twenty four hours of the day, the times of *fajr*, *chāsht*, *zuhr*, *‘aṣr*, *maghrib*, *‘ishā* and *tahajjud* carry special spiritual blessings. The Qur'ān and ḥadīth have explained these blessings. Similarly, Friday occupies special significance among the other days of the week. Likewise, the month of Ramaḍān or those of *hajj* are uniquely important with regard to other months of the year. Similarly, one single night among the last ten nights of Ramaḍān has been reserved by the Almighty in which He

informs His angels deputed to run the affairs of this world of the whole program of one year so that they can implement it at its prescribed time. The Almighty revealed the Qur'ān in one such night so that people could be warned through it and the mercy which was ordained in the advent of a messenger of God manifest itself.

The purpose to refer to all the revelation of the Qur'ān in this night is that its revelation is neither an accidental happening nor a concoction by the Prophet (sws); it is also not ill-suited and inappropriate to the requirements of time nor the product of fancy. On the contrary, it is the materialization of a scheme chalked out by the Almighty to guide His creatures. Thus He has revealed it in a night which is specifically reserved for the distribution of all wise matters. Hence, it is the duty of those for whom it has been revealed to duly honour it; otherwise, they should remember that the Almighty will never forgive their contrary attitude towards something He has revealed in such an elaborate manner. It is not a baseless thing which they can dismiss with a bout of laughter and it dissipates in thin air. Accepting or rejecting it – both entail serious consequences which are bound to come before them.

The words *إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ* state the purpose for which the Qur'ān was revealed: it has remained part of the divine scheme that just as the Almighty conclusively warned previous nations of good and evil before destroying them, similarly, before the Arabs are punished for their insolence, He will fully conclusively inform them. The purpose would be to afford opportunity to those who want to accept guidance to do so and leave others who do not want to do so with no excuse. In other words, the revelation of the Qur'ān and the advent of the Messenger of God are meant to convey the truth in such a manner that the addressees are left with no excuse to deny it. It is the established practice of God that once this is done, no nation is given any further respite. For this reason, every person should take any step after fully contemplating that he is facing a decisive situation. He has to choose between two things: an eternal kingdom or an eternal doom.

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ (٤)<sup>4</sup>

This verse defines the nature of this blessed night: all wise affairs are distributed in it. If this verse is interpreted in the light of Sūrah Qadr, it will become evident that on this night the Almighty informs His closest angels about all the affairs of this earth, and these angels then pass on

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4. On this night, all wise matters are distributed.

this information to the angels deputed on the earth in accordance with the scheme chalked out by God.

The word *أَمْرٌ* is qualified by *حَكِيمٍ* to point to the fact that no directive of God is devoid of wisdom. Whenever He decides to punish a nation, then this is also based on His justice and wisdom, and whenever He is merciful to a nation, then this too is based on His justice and wisdom.

This verse, in fact, sounds a warning to the addressees to seriously reflect on each and every aspect of the situation they are facing; if they continue to remain indifferent and do not fulfill the requirements of a divine scheme based on wisdom, then the consequences can be disastrous for them.

أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِندِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ (٥)<sup>5</sup>

The word *أَمْرًا* is declined in the accusative on account of *ikhtiṣāṣ* (specification), and the purpose is to highlight the importance and exaltedness of the distribution of affairs implying the fact that whatever happens, happens because of a special divine command; no one else has any say in this matter. Hence it is essential that people accept it in the capacity of a special command from the real sovereign of this universe, and follow each directive with true sentiments of obedience. If they reject them or make fun of them or deny them, then they should remember that this would be tantamount to rebellion against the real sovereign of this universe – the punishment for which is very grave.

The sentence *إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ* is of the same occasion as *إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِينَ*. Just as the previous verses say that the purpose of revelation of the Qur'ān is to sound warning, in the same manner, this verse states that it was pre-ordained in the scheme of God that He would send a Messenger to the Ishmaelites who will be a mercy for them as well as for the rest of the world. This is a reference to the predictions which are ascribed to Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) and which have already been cited earlier in this *tafsīr*. In other words, what is implied is that this Messenger has been sent in accordance with this scheme and exactly in the night fixed by the Almighty for all such important affairs.

رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦)<sup>6</sup>

This verse alludes to the purpose of sending the Messenger and the prophet Muḥammad (sws) is addressed viz: your Lord has sent you as a

5. As a special directive from Ourselves. Indeed, We were to send a Messenger.

6. As a special blessing from your Lord. Indeed, He it is Who sees and hears.



great mercy; if people do not duly value you, this attitude will not be of harm to you; it will only deprive them of the greatest mercy of God.

Verse three mentions that a Messenger is a warner and this verse mentions that he is a mercy and bearer of glad tidings. Both these features are two aspects of the same reality: what is the greatest mercy can become the greatest torment if it is not duly honoured.

It needs to be kept in mind that the aspect of warning is mentioned here first even though the real purpose of revelation of the Qur'ān is to show mercy to mankind. The reason for this has already been pointed out earlier while discussing the central theme of this *sūrah*: the real tone of the *sūrah* is to sound warning.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (indeed He hears and knows all): one aspect in citing these attributes at the end of the verse is to highlight the fact that the Lord of this universe is a wise and prudent being. He cannot let His creatures go scot-free. It is an essential requirement of these attributes that He keep an eye on the circumstances which befall His creatures and inform them of His directives; if they follow these, He reward them in this world and in the next, and if they rebel against Him, He punish them.

Another aspect in citing these attributes is that today whatever the leadership of the Quraysh is doing with the Book of God and his Messenger is fully in God's notice because He hears and knows all. When everything is in His knowledge and nothing is beyond His power, then the Prophet (sws) and the believers should rest assured that whatever is a requisite of His wisdom will definitely materialize; nothing can hinder this.

In order to fully understand the premises put forward by these verses, readers are advised to look up what I have written under verses 45-46 of Sūrah Qaṣaṣ.

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ<sup>7</sup>

This is warning to the opponents of the Prophet (sws) and what a severe warning it is. They are told that these warnings and glad tidings should not be considered baseless which are being sounded to them to bluff them; they are from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. The implication is that when He is the Lord and Master of every thing, who can have the power to impede any of His intentions which He wants to implement. If He wants, He can seize people whenever He wants to; no one can save them, and if He wants to

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7. With His mercy Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you show conviction.

forgive people, no one can stop Him from doing so.

The words **إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ** are meant to rebuke people: they are told that what is indicated above is obvious and self-evident; however, to believe in something does not require that it merely be obvious and self-evident; equally necessary is the will to believe in it. If this will is not found in a person, he can deny the most obvious of realities and the greatest of logicians is not able to convince him.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٨)<sup>8</sup>

This verse stresses what is said earlier: there is no god except Him whose intercession can be of any use to them. Life and death are under His control. He is their Lord and also the Lord of their forefathers. If their forefathers worshipped some other deity, it is their foolishness and ignorance; they should not make blindly following them an argument in favour of their attitude otherwise they will end up harming their own selves to benefit others.

بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ يَلْعَبُونَ (٩)<sup>9</sup>

The verse implies that though these warnings and glad tidings are undeniable realities which no sane person can deny, however, since these people are such slaves to their desires that they will not believe in anything they are being informed of unless they see it from their very eyes. For this reason, they are playing about in doubt and making fun.

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that it is not his responsibility to convince people who have adopted an indifferent attitude in life. These people will only get convinced when they will see torment lashing them; hence the Prophet (sws) should leave these people to themselves.

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُحَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٠) يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١)<sup>10</sup>

The verses say that the Prophet (sws) should wait for the day when the sky will appear with a smoke palpable to everyone. It will engulf all and by its very existence declare to everyone that it is a grievous torment.

This is actually a threat of the punishment which people were

8. There is no god but Him. He gives life and death. He is your Lord and also the Lord of your forefathers.

9. Yet they are in doubt, playing about.

10. So wait for the day when the sky will appear with a palpable smoke. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment.

demanding and were not prepared to acknowledge the warnings of the Prophet (sws) unless they were shown this punishment.

Here the question arises: what does دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ refer to? The word دُخَانٌ means “smoke” and the adjective مُّبِينٌ which qualifies it shows it will appear to every big and small very clearly and no one will be mistaken about it.

One group of exegetes has answered this question by saying that this smoke will appear at the advent of the Day of Judgement. They have also cited a narrative in support of this opinion; however, critics have dismissed it as a tale fabricated by story-tellers. In my opinion, this narrative is also against the context of the verses. Readers will see that the subsequent verses clearly show that this mention is not of the Day of Judgement but of the punishment which descends on nations who reject their respective messengers. Details of such a punishment have been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs* in the anecdotes of the peoples of ‘Ād, Thamūd and Shu‘ayb (rta).

Another group of exegetes regards it to refer to a famine which in their opinion was inflicted on the Quraysh as a result of a prayer of doom for them by the Prophet (sws). Such was its intensity that people were forced to eat the meat of dead animals, and such was the situation of every person that when out of hunger he would look towards the sky, it would appear to have smoke all over it.

Generally, our exegetes have adopted this second view; however, there are many things which make me uncomfortable about it.

Firstly, it is only in this exegetical narrative in which it is reported that the Prophet (sws) prayed for the doom of the whole of his nation; there exists is no other corroborating evidence. The prayer of the Prophet (sws) always remained: رَبِّ اهْدِنِي لِمَا تَرْضَى (Lord! Guide my people because they are unaware).<sup>11</sup> The most precarious instance was that of migration to Madīnah. Some other messengers of God have prayed for the doom of their people at such instances but we find not a single word of this sort coming out of the mouth of the Prophet (sws) even at this instance. He is only reported to have said: Makkah! You are very dear to me; but what can I do as the sons of your soil do not allow me to live here.

Even at instances of war when the armies of Muslims and Quraysh faced one another, the prayers of the Prophet (sws) consisted of beseeching God to grant perseverance to the believers and to help them in this cause. If ever a word came out of his mouth against his enemies, it was nothing but the prayer to strike awe in their hearts and make them lose courage. I am unable to recall if at even such instances the Prophet

11. See, for example: Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, vol. 7, 51.

(sws) ever prayed to God to harm his nation.

Secondly, the most precarious instance after migration was the truce of ḥudaybiyyah when the Quraysh's bias to emotional frenzy had become totally evident and the Muslims were stirred up against them to the ultimate extent. At this instance also, the Prophet (sws) did not pray for their doom; not only he this, he even appeased the Muslims and stopped them from waging war and the wisdom which the Qur'ān has mentioned in stopping this war, as shall be explained later in Sūrah Faṭḥ, is that if war had ensued there was a chance that harm might come to people who were Muslims in their hearts but were not able to migrate to Madīnah yet because of compelling circumstances. One should be kept in consideration that if because of these Muslims who had concealed their faith Muslims abstained from any warfare and the Prophet (sws) entered into an agreement with the Quraysh which was against the general emotions of the Companions, how could he have prayed to God to inflict such a drought on the people of Makkah in which they would be forced to eat forbidden food items? If such a drought had ensued, the leaders of the Quraysh and Ṭā'if would not have been merely afflicted by it; its real target would have been the poor and the masses of which a great many were Muslims.

Thirdly, here the Prophet (sws) has neither been asked here to pray for or pray against anyone; he has been asked to patiently wait for a day in which the sky will appear with such smoke that will overspread the whole nation and the very existence of this smoke will be instrumental in reminding people of the same painful doom they had been informed of but they kept making fun of it. In other words, the smoke is like a threat and a threat depends on the circumstances which arise. The Qur'ān has repeatedly warned the Quraysh of the punishment similar to the one meted out to the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Lot (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) but such a punishment never visited the Quraysh. This is because the majority of the people of Arabia embraced faith. Very few miscreants persisted in their mischief who were either killed in battles with the believers or who submitted to Islam at the conquest of Makkah.

Fourthly, it is linguistically inappropriate to call a drought by the expression دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (palpable smoke). Droughts are portrayed many a time in classical Arabic poetry. When cold northern winds blew in Arabia, they would cause drought. In certain areas, the situation would become very severe. Arab poets depict very moving scenes of this drought and through very various similes, metaphors and veiled reference try to portray the whole situation; however, I do not recall any instance in which a poet has called the worst of droughts as دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ or

adopted this style to describe its effects.

For these reasons, even if the narratives which report this drought are true, they cannot relate to this verse. There is a possibility that a drought befell and it is equally possible that it could have been very severe. It is a known practice of God that in the times of His messengers their people were afflicted with trials and tests to caution and prod them. The Qur'ān contains references to this practice of God. In spite of all these possibilities, this verse does not seem to relate to any drought whose severity was such that it made the sky appear as smoke before every person.

The expression دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ leads the mind to think of the punishment of the *ḥāṣib* and not to any drought. It was this punishment which previously visited most nations of Arabia who had denied their respective messengers. The details of this punishment can be seen in the anecdotes of the 'Ād, Thamūd, the peoples of Shu'ayb (sws) and Lot (sws) mentioned in the earlier *sūrahs*. The picture which can be gauged of this punishment from the description of the Qur'ān and classical Arab poetry is very similar to دُخَانٌ مُّبِينٌ. In this punishment, a tall column of smoke is seen rising towards the sky. In this smoke, until the sun is fully hidden in it, the rays of the sun mingle with its particles as a result of which to onlookers it seems as if in some jungle a fire has erupted whose smoke is rising in the sky. Then when the wind picks up and the storm heads in some direction, it seems as if black clouds are enveloping the place and are about to burst with rain. The storm then takes a very horrid shape and engulfs whole cities with sand and stones. When the people of the 'Ād were visited by their punishment they deemed the black smoke overspread above them to be a black cloud. In Sūrah Aḥqāf, this smoke is mentioned thus: فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمْطِرُنَا بَلْ هُوَ مَا فَكَّدَ بُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ (And when they saw the scourge in the form of a cloud heading for their valleys, they said: "This is a passing cloud that will drench us." "By no means! It is that what you had been seeking to hasten: it is a hurricane which contains a woeful scourge." (46:24)). In the destruction meted out to the people of Shu'ayb (rta), this punishment is called as: عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ. The verse reads: فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ (so they denied it, as a result of which they were seized by the punishment of the day of *ẓullah*, (26:189)). The word الظُّلَّةِ (*ẓullah*) is used for an umbrella, roof and tent and is also used for clouds.

The punishment of *ḥāṣib* in its initial stages appears to be a rising cloud or smoke. Thus it is quite likely that this be a threat of the punishment of *ḥāṣib*. This threat had been sounded to the Quraysh by recounting before them the tales of the peoples of 'Ād, Thamūd and

other nations. I have explained in great detail in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs* the nature of punishments which visited these peoples. These details will also be referred to in the exegesis of the forthcoming *sūrahs*. At these instances, I will also *inshallāh* present the research of my mentor Imām ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī in this regard.

This threat, as is indicated earlier, signifies that divine punishment is conditional to the rejection of the messenger of God. However, it is known that the majority of the Idolaters of Arabia had gradually embraced faith, after the truce of ḥudaybiyyah circumstances arose which mellowed down the severity of the opposition. Situation reached the extent that the Qur'ānic prediction of people entering the folds of Islam in large numbers mentioned in Sūrah Naṣr materialized to such an extent that every person saw it from his very eyes. It is obvious that there was no need for the threat which was conditional to rejection to materialize after this mass conversion. Thus the Quraysh in their collective capacity remained shielded from divine punishment. Only those of their miscreants were put to the sword who attacked the Muslims while the remaining ones submitted as Muslims at the conquest of Makkah.

يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١١)<sup>12</sup>

This verse expresses the severity of the punishment: it will totally enwrap people and no one will be able to find any escape route from it. The words هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ can be spoken or an expression of the situation: everyone can see that this was not a temporary thing that will come and go; it is the wrath of God which will break the backs.

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ (١٢)<sup>13</sup>

The implication is that these people are showing great arrogance now and haughtily asking to bring about the punishment. However, once they will encounter it, they will cry out: Lord! Deliver us from this punishment; we now embrace faith.

أَنَّى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرَى وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُبِينٌ (١٣) ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا مُعَلَّمٌ مَجْنُونٌ (١٤)<sup>14</sup>

This is the answer which will be given to these people at that time:

12. That smoke will envelop people. This is a grave torment.

13. Lord! Distance this torment from us; we are now believers.

14. But what opportunity remains for them now to pay heed! An enlightening Messenger had come to them. So they turned away from him and said: "A madman, taught by others!"

after the punishment descends, there will be no time to take heed; especially God has sent His messenger to them who had conclusively delivered the truth to them; however, they arrogantly turned away from it, and went on to blame the messenger that he has been taught and led by others and has been inflicted with a morbid fear of punishment of the Day of Judgement. The time of repentance is now over. It was when the messenger was making his call that they had this time. They squandered that opportunity and now they have no option left.

Such an answer has been cited at many places in the Qur'ān for the arrogant who were about to be afflicted with divine punishment. Some of the arrogant have been given this answer by addressing them. Thus for example, about the Pharaoh, it is said: *وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ* (now you have embraced faith and before this you were among the defiant, (10:91)). At another place, the words are: *فَقُولِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نَحْبُ دَعْوَتِكَ وَتَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ أَوْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ مَا لَكُم مِّن زَوَالٍ* (so after being seized by the punishment people who would have wrong their souls will cry out: "Our Lord! Give us a little more respite, we will respond to your call and follow the prophets." At that time, they will be answered thus: "Would you people not swear before this that you will never leave your stance, (14:44)). In the verse under discussion, this same thing is said to them while not directly addressing them. These stylistic changes are governed by eloquence of the discourse, and before people having a keen literary sense this does not need any explanation. In direct address, there exists sternness and in the indirect address, indifference is evident.

This blame of the Quraysh that the Prophet (sws) was taught by some other people and it is what they taught him which he presented to them in the name of divine revelation has been mentioned at some other places of the Qur'an as well. This blame had been invented by the Quraysh to satisfy those who after being influenced by the arguments of the Qur'an were led to think that such an intelligent discourse could not be produced by an illiterate person without divine help. In order to disillusion such people from the Qur'ān, the Quraysh fabricated this scandal that this discourse is not the product of any divine revelation; it is only a conspiracy of some literate people; it is these people who secretly author this discourse and this person presents it as divine revelation; the purpose of these people is to divide the nation. While making this allegation, they would also give the impression that some People of the Book as well as some non-Arabs were also among the conspirers so that in this manner they could successfully incite the nationalistic emotions of the Arabs.

I have already alluded at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr* to the real reason on account of which they called the Prophet (sws) to be a man possessed. Briefly restated, the Quraysh in the first place felt that he was so overwhelmed with the fear of the punishment of the Hereafter that all the time he reminded people of it; in the second place, such was the extent of certitude in his tone that everyone while being impressed by it would think that if this person had not been sent by God, why would he have forsaken his own comfort while grieving for others. In order to wash this impression of the people, the Quraysh had started saying that just as a person becomes possessed with some things and they keep repeating every moment those things and they keep seeing those things at every place, in a similar manner, this person too has become possessed and insane; he sees in every nook and corner what he imagines; there is no reality behind it; it is only a madness and insanity; why and from where can punishment visit them.

إِنَّا كَاشِفُو الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَائِدُونَ (١٥)<sup>15</sup>

The verse implies that what the Almighty could have done was that on their request that punishment be deferred from them so that they could embrace faith, He could have deferred their punishment; however, the truth of the matter is that even if God had acceded to their request they would have again tread the same path which they were treading before the advent of the punishment. Those who are slaves of their desires adopt this very attitude: when they are faced with some trial, they go to great lengths in showing their repentance but when the trial ends, they walk away as if nothing had happened; neither had they made a commitment nor will such a thing happen again.

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ إِنَّا مُنتَقِمُونَ (١٦)<sup>16</sup>

The verse refers to the fact that even if they are let off in this world, this should not be any reason of assurance for them. They should remember the day when the Almighty will seize them in a profound manner. This refers to the way they will be seized by the Day of Judgement. In whatever way, nations are seized in this world, it is nevertheless lesser in extent to how they will be seized in the Hereafter, which will be more abiding. On that Day, the Almighty will take full

15. If We for some time open the torment, you will do what you had been doing.

16. Remember the day when We will grasp intensely; on that day, We will take full revenge.



revenge from all the sinners.

## Section II: Verses (17-33)

By citing historical references, the subsequent verses substantiate what is stated in the previous paragraph. In order to warn the Quraysh, that part of the episode of Moses (sws) and Pharaoh is briefly recounted which makes it clear on them that the plot which the Pharaoh had contrived against Moses (sws) is the same which the Quraysh are plotting against the Messenger of God. The Almighty punished the Pharaoh and his followers and all their arrogance was brought to nothing. Similarly, these people too will be seized by God if they do not desist from their attitude. Readers may now proceed to study the subsequent verses.

### Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ كَرِيمٌ (١٧) أَنْ أَذُوا إِلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ إِلَيَّ لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٨) وَأَنْ لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِيَّايَ أَتِيكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (١٩) وَإِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَرْجُمُونِ (٢٠) وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَاعْتَرِلُونِ (٢١) فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنْ هَؤُلَاءَ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُونَ (٢٢) فَاسْرِ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبِعُونَ (٢٣) وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا إِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُونَ (٢٤) كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٢٥) وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ (٢٦) وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ (٢٧) كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ (٢٨) فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْظَرِينَ (٢٩) وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (٣٠) مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيًّا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣١) وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَاَهُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٢) وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا فِيهِ بَلَاءٌ مُّبِينٌ (٣٣)

And before them, We tested the Pharaoh's people and a gracious messenger came to them with the message: "Hand over to me God's servants; I am for you a trustworthy messenger and that you should not show be rebellious against God; I present to you a clear argument; and I seek refuge with My and Your Lord from you stoning me, and if you do not attest me, leave me to myself." (17-21)

Thus he prayed to his Lord that they are sinful people. It was ordered: "Take along My servants with you in the night; beware! you shall be pursued." And leave the sea at rest; they will become an army drowned. (22-24)

How many orchards, fountains, cornfields, blissful abodes and pleasant things in which took delight they left behind them! Thus do We deal with the wrongdoers; and what was once theirs We gave to others. So neither the heavens nor the earth shed tears for them; nor were they given reprieve. (25-29)

And We saved the Israelites from a humiliating punishment that is from the Pharaoh. Indeed, he was a great tyrant and a transgressor. And knowingly We gave them preference to all the world, and showed them signs in which there was an open reward. (30-33)

### Explanation

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ كَرِيمٌ<sup>17</sup> (١٧)

At a number of places, the Qur'ān has referred to the similarities between the Quraysh and the people of the Pharaoh. Here too, this reference is present. The implication is that just as at the time of the Prophet's advent, the Almighty put the Quraysh through a test, He put the people of the Pharaoh through a similar test earlier. Just as the Quraysh are affluent and have abundant resources, the people of the Pharaoh too had these favours in abundance. Then just as a noble messenger was sent to the Quraysh to conclusively communicate the truth to them, similarly, a noble messenger was also sent to the Pharaoh and his people. The purpose of this mention obviously is to let the Quraysh know that they too will meet the same fate as the that of the Pharaoh and his people if they adopt their attitude.

It is clearly evident from these details that whatever wealth and honour nations receive in this world is a trial and test from God. By blessing them with such favours, He sees if they will become grateful and serve Him or if they become rebellious and tyrannical. If they adopt the latter of these attitudes, they are given a little respite after which the Almighty totally wipes them out.

The attribute كَرِيمٌ (noble) which qualifies the word رَسُولٌ (messenger) signifies the fact that since a messenger is an envoy of God of the worlds, nobility and respect are an essential part of his status; the question whether he is rich or poor or whether he belongs to the royal family of the Pharaoh or to a poor family of the Israelites whom the Pharaoh and his followers regard to be slaves and unworthy. The real status of this messenger is that He is the envoy of God and only God is

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17. And before them, We tested the Pharaoh's people and a gracious messenger came to them.

more noble than His envoy; no one else is or can be nobler than him.

أَنْ أَدُّوا إِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِنَّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ<sup>18</sup>

A genitive particle (حرف جر) is suppressed before the letter أَنْ. The meaning after taking this suppression in consideration would be: the noble messenger came with the message that the servants of God should be consigned to him. This is the same directive which is given in Sūrah Tāhā by the words: فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (so send with me the Israelites, (20:47)). The difference between the two is that here in the verse under discussion, Moses (sws) has also mentioned the reason for making this demand: no one has the right to make the servants of God to be his servants; thus these servants should be allowed to go with him so that they are able to serve and worship God the way they want to without any hindrance. The question of the destination where Moses (sws) wanted to take the Israelites has been discussed at many places of this *tafsīr*. Restating it is not required; this much is evident that Moses (sws) wanted the Israelites to have complete freedom in serving and worshipping God. He was not prepared to give the Pharaoh the right to make them his own servants.

By the words إِنَّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ, Moses (sws) has tried to assure the Pharaoh and his courtiers that he is not an imposter or a phony; but that he is in fact God's messenger and is delivering to them with full honesty and integrity the very message God has given him to deliver to them. Moses (sws) did not utter these words merely to absolve himself of impersonation; concealed in them is also a threat: if they reject him by regarding him to be an imposter, the consequences will be very grave. He Who has sent him as a messenger, will necessarily take revenge from them.

وَأَنْ لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنِّي آتِيكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ<sup>19</sup>

These words constitute the message which Moses (sws) was required to deliver to the Israelites: they should plainly accept this directive of God. If they adopt a tyrannical attitude, then this tyranny will not be merely against Moses (sws); it will primarily be against God because Moses (sws) is merely an envoy of God.

The words إِنِّي آتِيكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ refer to the miracles of the staff and the

18. With the message: "Hand over to me God's servants; I am for you a trustworthy messenger;

19. And that you should not show be rebellious against God; I present to you a clear argument;

white hand given to Moses (sws). In other words, he holds a very clear sanction that he is God's envoy and shows these miracles to the Israelites so that they are left with no doubt about his veracity. Since Moses (sws) was sent to a very tyrannical and oppressive king, the Almighty from the very beginning armed him with such miracles which could convey his veracity to his opponents.

وَأِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَرْجُمُونِ (٢٠)<sup>20</sup>

These words were uttered by Moses (sws) when his demand to let the Israelites go with him had caused great commotion among the Copts. At that time, he had also been threatened for his life, and a chance had arisen that his nation might lose their mind and stone him to death. At that time, he proclaimed to the people that if they intend to stone him, he will seek refuge with his Lord Who is also their Lord. The words **وَرَبِّكُمْ** (and also your Lord) have a very effective appeal in them, a very subtle call to the truth and a very austere warning; concealed in these words is also the sarcasm that while being led away by the big devil who poses himself as their "great Lord" they should not do something which dooms the whole nation.

وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَأَعْتَزِلُونِ (٢١)<sup>21</sup>

The words imply that if these people are not ready to believe that Moses (sws) is the God's envoy, then at least they should not be besmear themselves with the sin of killing or stoning him to death and that they should leave him to himself. They should let him take along the Israelites to wherever he wants to take them; it would have been better if they believed in what he said and professed faith in him; this act would have ensured their success in both this world and the next. If they cannot do this, then at least they should not cause hindrance in his mission.

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ مُجْرِمُونَ (٢٢)<sup>22</sup>

The Copts were not the least moved by this appeal made by Moses (sws). They continued to conspire and plan against him. At last, Moses (sws) pleaded before his Lord thus: "Lord! These people will not listen to and accept my call; they are chronic criminals; only you can save me

20. And I seek refuge with My and Your Lord from you stoning me;

21. And if you do not attest me, leave me to myself."

22. Thus he prayed to his Lord that they are sinful people.

from their grasp.”

فَأَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبَعُونَ (٢٣)<sup>23</sup>

Moses (sws) made this invocation at the right time, and hence it was accepted forthwith. It was not even deemed necessary to say a few words of immediate acceptance of this invocation which showed that Moses (sws) was as a result directed to do what this verse states. He was directed to take along with him the servants of God during the night, and he was also warned that he shall be followed. This warning was given because though the Pharaoh was frustrated at the calamities which would befall Egypt because of Moses' invocation to God and had thus allowed Moses (sws) to take them away for a few days, but later when Moses (sws) embarked upon this journey with the whole nation, the Pharaoh changed his mind. He realized that he had made a mistake in giving him this permission. So he immediately went in pursuit of them with all his regional leaders so that he could force them to come back. The Almighty had already informed Moses (sws) of this so that there is no delay in his march with his people and they are able to cross the sea at the appointed time.

وَاثْرُكُوا الْبَحْرَ رَهَوًا إِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّعْرِفُونَ (٢٤)<sup>24</sup>

The word رَهَو means “standing still”. The implication is that Moses (sws) should leave the sea before that wind ceases which will be used by God to part the sea and make way for them. As soon as they leave the sea, the sea will become calm and the displaced water will come to its position. During this time the Egyptians while pursuing them will be within the sea and water will engulf them in such a manner that they will neither be able to move backward nor move forward.

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٢٥) وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ (٢٦) وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ (٢٧)<sup>25</sup>

The verse implies that they will become prey to the waves of the sea while being deprived of the orchards, fountains, crop fields, grand mansions and luxury items which had made them arrogant. They reckoned that these things are a guarantee of their success and

23. It was ordered: “Take along My servants with you in the night; beware! you shall be pursued.”

24. And leave the sea at rest; they will become an army drowned.

25. How many orchards, fountains, cornfields, blissful abodes and pleasant things in which took delight they left behind them!

development, and those who threaten them with destruction are absolutely insane. However, it was proven on the contrary that without the fear of God these things are a prelude to destruction and when destruction comes none of these things are of any benefit.

كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ (٢٨)<sup>26</sup>

The words *نَفَعُلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ* are suppressed after *كَذَلِكَ* because of textual indication. The meaning would be: “We did with them what we do with sinners and thus shall We do in the future.” The next part of the verse means that the Almighty made others the owners of these things. “Others” do not refer to the Israelites. It is not established that once the Israelites left Egypt, they returned later. It is possible that “others” refer to neighbouring nations which the Pharaoh and his companions constantly feared would join hands with the Israelites and occupy Egypt. It is evident from the Torah that the motive of the campaign of killing the male members of the Israelites had been launched for fear of the fact that if these Israelites would increase in number they might join hands with the enemies and pose a threat for the Pharaoh and his people.

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْظَرِينَ (٢٩)<sup>27</sup>

The verse refers to the fact that as long as the Pharaoh and his nation remained in power, they thought that they were the pioneers of a great civilization and culture and that the whole world will remain under the burden of their favour, but neither did the heavens nor did the earth shed any tear on their destruction; in fact, they relieved a sigh of relief at the extirpation of their filthy existence from this world.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the heavens and the earth do cry out at the death of an innocent being who has been the target of oppression. It is stated in the Torah (Genesis, 4:10) that the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord from the earth.<sup>28</sup> However, at the death and destruction of the oppressed and the defiant both the heavens and the earth rejoice – especially at the destruction of the defiant to whom the Almighty has conclusively conveyed the truth through His messengers.

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26. Thus do We deal with the wrongdoers; and what was once theirs We gave to others.

27. So neither the heavens nor the earth shed tears for them; nor were they given reprieve.

28. See: Genesis, 4:19.

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وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ (٣٠) مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيًّا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (٣١)<sup>29</sup>

The words مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ are a permutative (*badal*) from الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ. In other words, the Almighty has dubbed the Pharaoh as humiliating punishment. The Pharaoh would regard Moses (sws) and all his people to be lowly; however, to God it was the Pharaoh who was not only lowly but a humiliating punishment.

The words إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيًّا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ express why the Pharaoh is regarded as a humiliating punishment. The Qur'ān says that this is because he was very rebellious and among those who transgress the bounds set by God. People who are rebellious before God are a punishment for the oppressed and shall stand humiliated before God.

وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَا لَهُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٢)<sup>30</sup>

The verse implies that while the Almighty had the Pharaoh and his people drowned, He chose the Israelites – who were been trampled upon by them – for the guidance of the world. It may be kept in mind that a nation who is made the recipient of God's *sharī'ah* is naturally the most capable and worthy of guiding people. However, this position is conditional to the fact that it will discharge with full honesty the responsibility imposed on it by virtue of this position. If does not discharge this responsibility, the Almighty confiscates this position from it and consigns it to others. In a particular period of time, the Israelites were given this position but when they did not remain worthy of it they were deposed and the responsibility of guiding people was entrusted to the Muslim *ummah*.

The words عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ allude to the philosophy of history: the rise and fall of nations in this world does not occur by chance; it is the Almighty Who selects a nation which meets His standards and those who do not are rejected by Him. The message which can be gauged from this is that those who have been deposed of this position should censure themselves on their own inability instead of blaming others, and those who have been sovereign should show gratitude to God instead of being overcome by pride and arrogance and should discharge their responsibilities. The rise and fall of nations which takes place in this world is according to a divine design and all its basis relies on the moral conduct of nations.

29. And We saved the Israelites from a humiliating punishment that is from the Pharaoh. Indeed, he was a great tyrant and a transgressor.

30. And knowingly We gave them preference to all the world,

God's knowledge is inerrant and His wisdom is unbiased.

These verses very sternly warn the Israelites who during the time of their revelation were opposing the Qur'ān and Muḥammad (sws). This warning does not require any explanation. If they had only understood the one point that the Almighty chose them on the basis of His knowledge, and now on the basis of this very knowledge has decided that they are no longer worthy of it, they would have saved themselves from this evil fate which has come before them as a consequence of opposing Islam.

وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا فِيهِ بَلَاءٌ مُّبِينٌ (٣٣)<sup>31</sup>

The real meaning of the word بَلَاءٌ is "trial" and "test"; however, this trial can also take place through blessings and favours as well as through calamities and hardships. The former trial is to test whether people remain grateful or not and the latter trial is to test whether people remain patient or not. Contextual indications show that in this verse this word is used in the first of these meanings just as in verse seventeen of Sūrah Anfāl it has been mentioned with the adjective حَسَنًا. The reference is to the favours which the Almighty granted them in a variety of ways whilst they were crossing the desert and later in the life they spent in the desert and in the conquest of Palestine as well as later phases. Their details are mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah.

### Section III: Verses (34-57)

In the succeeding verses, the real reason for the rebelliousness of the Quraysh is highlighted: they do not imagine that there is life after this worldly existence; for this reason they are engrossed in the present and unmindful of the future. In order to remove this misconception of theirs, first the intellectual and natural arguments which substantiate the law of reward and punishment are cited. After this, the fate of both the believers and the disbelievers is depicted.

Readers may now proceed to recite these verses.

#### Text and Translation

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءَ لَيَقُولُونَ (٣٤) إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ (٣٥) فَأَنُتُوا بِآبَائِنَا  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٦) أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا

31. And showed them signs in which there was an open reward.



مُجْرِمِينَ (٣٧) وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ (٣٨) مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٩) إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيقَاتُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٠) يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلًى عَنْ مَوْلَى شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤١) إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٤٢) إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزَّقُّومِ (٤٣) طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ (٤٤) كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ (٤٥) كَغَلِي الْحَمِيمِ (٤٦) خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ (٤٧) ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ (٤٨) ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ (٤٩) إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ (٥٠) إِنَّ الْمُتَعْتِبِينَ فِي مَقَامِ أَمِينٍ (٥١) فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٥٢) يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ (٥٣) كَذَلِكَ وَرَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ (٥٤) يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ (٥٥) لَا يَذُقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَى وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٥٦) فَضَلًّا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٥٧) فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨) فَأَرْقُبْ إِنِّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُونَ (٥٩)

These people emphatically say: "We shall die only this first death and after this we shall not be raised to life; so bring back to us our fathers, if you are truthful." (34-36)

Are they better or the people of Tubba' and those who were before them? We destroyed them. Indeed, they were a defiant people. (37)

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for amusement. We did not create them but for a purpose, but most of them are not aware of this fact. Indeed, the Day of Judgement is the appointed time for all. On that Day, no relative shall be of any benefit to a relative nor shall they be helped. Except those to whom God shows mercy. Indeed, He alone is the Mighty One, the Merciful. (38-42)

The tree of the Zaqqūm tree shall be the food of the sinners. Like dregs of oil; it will sizzle in the belly the way hot water sizzles. Seize him and drag him into the depths of Hell; then pour out the punishment of hot water over his head. Taste this! You posed to be very powerful and honourable. This is the very thing about which you remained doubtful. (43-50)

As for the righteous, they shall dwell in a peaceful place amid gardens and fountains. They will be dressed in *sundus* and *istabraq* sitting opposite one another. Thus shall be the God-fearing treated. And We shall wed them to large-eyed houris. They shall ask for every kind of fruit, with peace. Here, after their first death, they shall not taste death again and God protected them from the torment of Hell. This will be specially because of your God's grace. This indeed is great success. (51-57)

**Explanation**

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءَ لَيَقُولُونَ (٣٤) إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ (٣٥)<sup>32</sup>

The verse states that these people very emphatically claim that the threat for the Day of judgement is mere bluff. Death is only faced once – and that is in this world. There is no other death or life after this.

فَأْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٣٦)<sup>33</sup>

In order to substantiate their claim stated earlier, they would demand from the believers to bring back any of their forefathers to life if the believers were truthful in saying that there is life after death; if the believers meet their demand, they will regard life after death to be a reality. This subject is discussed in Sūrah Jāthiyah in the following words: وَإِذَا تُنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتُّنُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٥: ٢٥) (and when Our clear verses about life after death are recited to them, their only argument is: “if you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!” (45:25)). The Qur’ān has regarded this to be their only argument, and after referring to it has just ignored it and not even refuted it. This is an allusion to the fact that such is the nonsensical nature of their only argument in which they took pride that it does not even need to be commented upon.

أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (٣٧)<sup>34</sup>

The nation of *Tubba’* refers to the *Tabābi’ah* of Yemen who were very famous in Arabia because of their material might and advancement as well as their intellectual abilities. Arab poets have eulogized them a lot.

In response to the previously mentioned claim of the Quraysh, the Qur’ān has asked them to speak up if they are more superior to the nation of the *Tubba’* viz a viz material might and advancement and intellectual abilities, and if in spite of the superiority of the nation of the *Tubba’* the Almighty destroyed them – neither did their material might benefitted them nor their intellectual prowess; so what is the reason for this arrogance of the Quraysh that no one will be able to get hold of him. When the Almighty destroyed people more powerful them, why can’t He destroy them. Earlier nations too met with a similar fate. The people of

32. These people emphatically say: “We shall die only this first death and after this we shall not be raised to life;

33. So bring back to us our fathers, if you are truthful.”

34. Are they better or the people of *Tubba’* and those who were before them? We destroyed them. Indeed, they were a defiant people.

the ‘Ād, the Thamūd and some other nations were superior to the Quraysh in every respect; but when they became rebellious against God, the Almighty routed them. So what superiority and eminence do the Quraysh have that they will always remain in favour with God even though they are more rebellious than these ancient nations. What counts before God is character and morality and not material wealth and riches nor grand mansions nor atom bombs and missiles. When nations become morally corrupt, the Almighty destroys them from the very bombs they made to destroy other nations, and thus are forced to commit suicide with their own weapons.

Examples of God’s law of retribution are found in this world and are found so abundantly that they are uncountable. So why should such a Day of reward and punishment be doubted in which the Almighty shall reward and punish individuals the way He rewarded and punished nations in this world.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ (٣٨) مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ<sup>35</sup> (٣٩)

In the afore-mentioned paragraphs, historical evidence as well as evidence from the world around man was presented to substantiate reward and punishment. In these verses, argument for the same is drawn from the attributes of God and from what they morally and intellectually entail. The verse states that the Almighty has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them for amusement; on the contrary, He has created them for a higher purpose and true objective. It is the essential requirement of this true objective that one day this world cease to exist and after this a day come when the Creator rewards those who spent their lives in accordance with God’s will, and punishes those who remained disobedient. If such a day does not come and this world continues without end or ends abruptly such that neither its pious inhabitants are rewarded nor the evil ones punished, then this means that its Creator, God forbid, is a merry-maker who while sitting in the heavens is witnessing a drama of the oppression and the oppressed, and when gets bored from watching this drama, He will dismantle this world or perhaps this drama will continue unabated forever. Obviously, this notion is such a wrong estimation about the merciful and wise creator of this world that cannot

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35. And We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for amusement. We did not create them but for a purpose, but most of them are not aware of this fact.

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even be imagined. It is strange however that the majority is inflicted with this notion and is absolutely unaware of its consequences.

The fact that this is a deviant notion has been explained in detail in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*. Hence, I will content myself here with this brief comment.

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيقَاتُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٠)<sup>36</sup>

Stated in this verse is the essential outcome of the fact that this world has been created with a true objective: it is against the knowledge, justice, wisdom and mercy of God that this world continues the way it is or ends abruptly; it is essential that a day come in which the Almighty sits in His chair of justice and decide the affairs of all. As a result, those who spent their lives uprightly will be rewarded and those who spent their lives in transgression and usurpation will be bear punishment. That day will be the day in which perfect justice manifests itself and no one will escape from it. The small and the big, the rulers and the ruled, the beggar and the king – all will be called to justice and such will be this justice that neither does any reality remains hidden nor can anyone cause any hindrance in any way in the justice being dispensed. The word أَجْمَعِينَ should be specially paid attention to.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلَى عَنْ مَوْلَى شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤١)<sup>37</sup>

The word مَوْلَى is used for members of a family and tribe which are related to a person through his blood and lineage and which have mutual feelings of support and unity. The verse states that that day will be of such selfishness that no relative will be of any benefit to another relative.

The expression وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ points to the fact that moreover there will be no other source of help either. It is evident from contextual indication that this help refers to the help which the Idolaters of Arabia expected from their deities.

إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٤٢)<sup>38</sup>

The verse says that on that day only those people will succeed who will be blessed with God's grace and only those people will receive His grace

36. Indeed, the Day of Judgement is the appointed time for all.

37. On that Day, no relative shall be of any benefit to a relative nor shall they be helped.

38. Except those to whom God shows mercy. Indeed, He alone is the Mighty One, the Merciful.

who are worthy of it. God is powerful and at the same time He is also merciful. No one will be able to bail out people seized by Him. And no one will be able to deprive people of His mercy who are worthy of it. In other words, people should fear Him alone and expect mercy from Him alone as well.

إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزَّقُّومِ (٤٣) طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ (٤٤) كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ (٤٥) كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيمِ (٤٦)<sup>39</sup>

Earlier, the Day of Judgment was mentioned. Here what will befall the sinners as a result of the verdicts delivered therein is depicted. It is stated that the tree of cactus will provide subsistence to the sinners. This cactus is the cactus of Paradise; hence; hence, only God knows what it actually is. We can only have a slight imagination of it by drawing an analogy from the cactus of this world. We cannot grasp what it actually is.

People have translated the word مُهْل variously. By giving preference to its etymological construction, I have translated it as the sediment of oil. The verses say that it will seethe in the bellies of the sinners the way the sediment of oil does, and shall sizzle the way water sizzles.

In other words, this food will boil the way the sediment of sour oil boils viz a viz its intensity, heat and bitterness and will sizzle like sizzle like sizzling water. When oil is heated, it real gets very hot but it does not sizzle; when water is heated it sizzles as well. Here in this simile both facets of being heated up are combined.

خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ (٤٧) ثُمَّ صُبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ (٤٨)<sup>40</sup>

Giving due consideration to eloquence, it is suppressed that the above words will be proclaimed to these people from God. The source of this proclamation is not mentioned; only the proclamation itself is cited. In other words, the wardens Hell will be directed to seize these people and drag them to the depth of Hell and spill beackets of boiling water on them as a sizzling punishment.

ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ (٤٩) إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ (٥٠)<sup>41</sup>

This statement can be an expression of the situation that will befall

39. The tree of the Zaqqūm tree shall be the food of the sinners. Like the sediment of oil; it will sizzle in the belly the way hot water sizzles.

40. Seize him and drag him into the depths of Hell; then pour out the punishment of hot water over his head.

41. Taste this! You posed to be very powerful and honourable. This is the very thing about which you remained doubtful.

these people and it can also be interpreted to be made by the wardens. Each one of them will be told that they posed to be very powerful and honourable in the previous world and as a result arrogantly denied this Day; today they should taste its torment; this is the same thing about which they create all sorts of doubts.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ (٥١) فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٥٢)<sup>42</sup>

After the depiction of the fate of the sinners, these verses portray the fate of the God-fearing: they will reside in a peaceful place; they will neither have any fear there nor any sorrow. They will be admist orchards and fountains, and they will have no fear of the fact that anyone may snatch these blessings from them or that these blessings cease or that they be regarded accountable for any of them.

يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ (٥٣)<sup>43</sup>

*Sundus* (سُندُس) and *istabraq* (إِسْتَبْرَق) are the names of silk cloth. Some people have distinguished between them with regard to their thickness. However, since these cloths belong to Paradise, such a distinction is unimportant. Only God knows what actually they will be like.

The word مُتَقَابِلِينَ here refers to the fact that these people will face one another. As per the linguistic construction of the verses, verbs like يَجْلِسُونَ (sitting) or يَتَكَيَّفُونَ (sitting while being supported by cushions etc) will be considered as understood to be present here. In other words, they will be sitting face to face with one another while wearing attires of *sundus* and *istabraq*. Sitting facing one another shows that they will be dear to one another and will enjoy the confidence of one another. Since they gave noble advice to one another in the previous world, its noble fate will be before them. For this reason, they will sit with one another whole heartedly. On the other hand, the disbelievers and their leaders will hurl insults on one another.

كَذَلِكَ وَرَزَوْنَاهُمْ مِمَّا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ (٥٤) يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُنْجِيٍّ (٥٥)<sup>44</sup>

The verse states that as culmination of their bliss, the Almighty will

42. As for the righteous, they shall dwell in a peaceful place amid gardens and fountains.

43. They will be dressed in *sundus* and *istabraq* sitting opposite one another.

44. Thus shall be the God-fearing treated. And We shall wed them to large-eyed houris. They shall ask for every kind of fruit, with peace.

have them wedded to large-eyed houris, In Arabic literature, this epithet signifies the pinnacle of beauty of a woman.

The subsequent verse says that for them will be all kinds of fruit in abundance. Whatever fruit they want, they will demand from dutiful attendants. Neither will they have any fear of reduction in fruits nor any fear of being deprived of this bliss nor will they have any fear of death. They will be shielded from all fears and enjoy eternal bliss.

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٥٦) فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ  
ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٥٧)<sup>45</sup>

The first implies that after the death they tasted in this world, they will never taste it again. Both their life and its pleasure will be abiding. They were rid of death and their Lord shielded from Hell. This is a special favour to them by Prophet's Lord, and this, in reality, is the supreme triumph and not the one which the slaves of this world have given their hearts to and have been so infatuated with their love that they think that the life of this world is all that there is; after this, there is no life or death.

#### Section IV: Verses (58-59)

Readers may recall that this *sūrah* began with the mention of Qur'ān's exaltedness: it is indeed a great favour which the Almighty has blessed the Arabs with. If they duly honour and value it, they will be blessed with great success both in this world and in that to come. However, if out of arrogance they do not duly value it, they should remember that this great favour can become an equally great torment for them, and they will only hasten their own destruction both in this world and in that to come. After this introductory topic, the *sūrah* went on to state arguments which substantiate the veracity of the Qur'ān. Now at the end, the very subject discussed in the introduction is reminded of from a new aspect. It is as if the *sūrah* ends on the same subject with which it began. Several examples of this style of similarity between the opening and the closing verses of a *sūrah* can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. In the speeches of eloquent orators as well, subtle example of this style can be seen. An orator generally ends his speech by reminding the audience of the topic with which he began it.

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45. Here, after their first death, they shall not taste death again and God protected them from the torment of Hell. This will be specially because of your God's grace. This indeed is great success.

This is because a complete reminder is sounded to them in the end.

Readers may now proceed to recite the verses.

### Text and Translation

فَإِنَّمَا يَسِّرْنَاهُ بِلسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨) فَارْتَقِبْ إِنَّهُمْ مُرْتَقِبُونَ (٥٩)

Thus We have efficiently adorned this Qur'ān in your own tongue so that they may receive reminder. Wait you then; they too are waiting. (59)

### Explanation

فَإِنَّمَا يَسِّرْنَاهُ بِلسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨)<sup>46</sup>

The letter ف indicates the affinity with the subject of the previous sections of the sūrah. The aspect in which this affinity exists is already referred to above.

The word يَسِير means to make something appropriate and suitable for a purpose and to make it firm and sound in all aspects. The expression يَسِّرَ الْفَرَسَ لِلرَّكُوبِ would mean to make a horse ready for riding by adorning it with a bridle, saddle, stirrups and other relevant things. The expression يَسِّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ would mean to adorn the Qur'ān with all that is necessary to make it appropriate for education and reminder. People who have interpreted this verse to mean that the Qur'ān is a very easy and bland book have not been able to grasp the essence of the word. No doubt that the Qur'ān is also an easy book; however, this ease is reference to its higher objective of teaching and reminding people for which the Almighty has revealed it. This objective has multifarious aspects, and since the Qur'ān comprehensively covers all these aspects as well as their essential consequences, it contains many difficult and intricate aspects. However, to effectively communicate these aspects to the hearts of people, it has adopted such majestic styles which cannot be emulated by anyone. However, these things themselves require deep deliberation because they relate to wisdom, and wisdom requires deep deliberation. I have alluded to some aspects of this issue in the explanation of verse ninety seven of Sūrah Maryam and God willing, I will attempt to shed more light on this issue in the exegesis of Sūrah Qamar.

The word بِلسَانِكَ refers to the pure and unadulterated language of the Quraysh which was best archetype of eloquent Arabic, and the Prophet (sws) was best exemplar of this eloquent Arabic. This is a reference to a

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46. Thus We have efficiently adorned this Qur'ān in your own tongue so that they may receive reminder.



very important aspect of the *taysīr* of the Qur'ān: to conclusively communicate the truth to the Quraysh, the Almighty has revealed this Book in the language of the Prophet (sws) which is the best exemplar of the language of the Quraysh. If they do not understand the Qur'ān even in this language, then this is no fault of the Book; rather, it is their own fault for which the Prophet (sws) is not responsible.

The words *لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ* express the purpose of this revelation of the Qur'ān in a very elaborate and thorough manner: to receive reminder. This means that they be reminded of whatever the Almighty has inherently granted their intellect and nature, learn a lesson from the signs which are found within man and in the world outside him and bear in mind the guidance received from the previous prophets in particular their great ancestor Abraham (sws). The Qur'ān is reminding them of all these things in the best of languages and in the best of styles. Concealed in these words is also the warning that if they are not prepared to be reminded, then they should get ready to meet the fate destined by God for such rebellious people. Moreover, their own history also reminds them of this fate.

فَارْتَقِبْ إِنَّهُمْ مُرْتَقِبُونَ (٥٩)

This verse clearly expresses the hidden warning that was concealed in the previous verse. In other words, if these people are not prepared to benefit from this Book and insist that they will only believe after observing the very punishment they are being threatened with, then like them, the Prophet (sws) too should wait for this punishment. On this punishment hinges the judgement. Readers may take a look at the explanation of verse ten.

By the grace of God, with these lines, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*. فالحمد لله على إحسانه (so gratitude be to God for His favour)

Raḥmānābād,

22<sup>nd</sup> May 1976 AD

22<sup>nd</sup> Jumādī al-Thānī 1396 AH

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47. Wait you then; they too are waiting.